

Regional Growth Management Strategy

"The Region One Advisory Council (RAC) has identified growth management as one of the three main issues facing the region."²¹

This regional growth management strategy is a flexible road map, documenting the path taken to date and setting forth a general route to be taken to achieve our vision for the region – fostering economic prosperity through preservation of our communities and enhancement of our region's quality of life. Three types of management tools were selected for inclusion in the regional strategy:

- Those addressing **land development standards** – ideally helping to establish a consistent set of basic development standards throughout the region;
- Those that provide **incentives** to encourage certain types of development – including encouraging the development community to help preserve the region's communities and rural and scenic assets and enhance the quality of life; and
- Those that deal with the **public sector financial requirements** that accompany growth and new development.

The tools selected have four common characteristics:

- They help achieve continuity in the region's development processes;
- They utilize local government's land use authority without placing additional mandates or regulations on local governments;
- They provide incentives to the development community to help preserve our communities and enhance our quality of life; and
- They recognize and attempt to address some of the financial requirements that accompany growth.

The tools identified as being most applicable to the needs of the region are listed in Exhibit 2. In each case we have also identified which management objective the tool addresses. In some instances, a management tool addresses more than one objective, enhancing the benefits of implementation.

Development standards are a fundamental tool available to local governments to manage how land is developed and to assure the quality of development within a community. Basic development standards also provide a foundation for exercising land use management authority within a community. For the development community, development standards establish a consistency in development practices. For landowners and buyers, development standards pro-



Fostering economic prosperity by preserving our community's unique assets and enhancing our region's quality of life.



Managing how land is developed to assure the quality of development within a community.

²¹ Northwest Georgia Growth Management Initiative, *Land of Legend, People of Vision - Identifying Growth Trends in Northwest Georgia, 2000.*

Exhibit 2 Recommended Management Tools

Exhibit 2 Recommended Management Tools	Management of Development Patterns				Protection of Water Resources					Protection of Scenic & Rural Assets	Planning & Management of Infrastructure	Technical Complexity	Administrative Requirements	Education Requirements	Legal Requirements	Inter-governmental Cooperation
	Growth Management Objective				Implementation Considerations					Applicable Area of Region						
Land Development Standards																
Development Standards	X	X	X	X	1	1	2	1	1	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Septic System Management Programs	X	X		X	1	1	2	1	1	Developing, Rural						
Community Forest Management Programs	X	X	X		2	2	2	2	1	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Historic and Architectural Preservation Ordinances	X		X		2	2	2	2	1	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Overlay Districts & Special Area Protection Ordinances	X	X	X		3	2	3	2	2	Urban, Developing, Rura						
Adequate Public Facilities Development Standards	X	X		X	5	4	5	5	5	Urban, Developing						
Incentive Based Development																
Conservation Easements	X	X	X		3	2	2	2	1	Urban, Rural						
Conservation Subdivision Ordinances	X	X	X		3	2	2	2	1	Urban, Rural						
In-fill Development Incentives	X				4	3	3	2	1	Urban, Developing						
Mixed-use Development Ordinances	X				4	3	4	2	1	Urban, Developing						
Transfer of Development Rights	X	X	X		5	5	5	4	5	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Financial Structuring for Development																
Infrastructure Planning & Strategic Location of Public Facilities	X			X	3	1	1	1	2	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Capital Improvement Planning	X			X	3	3	1	1	2	Urban, Developing, Rural						
Development Impact Fees				X	5	4	4	4	2	Urban, Developing						
Tax Base/Revenue Sharing	X			X	4	4	4	4	5	Urban, Developing, Rural						
					Implementation Considerations Rating is on a scale of 1-5. [1 = Low level of difficulty] [5 = High level of difficulty]											

protect public health and safety while maximizing flexibility as to what can be developed where. It is the belief of the RAC that a consistent set of basic development standards is needed throughout the region. This will establish a consistency to development that will benefit all involved and lessen the situations where one community is negatively affected by the actions of another.

Incentives are as important a growth management tool as any government regulation. In many cases they can be more effective than regulations. Therefore, particular attention has been given to identifying and evaluating potential incentives that could be used within the region to encourage development practices that preserve the character of the region's communities and rural and scenic assets while enhancing the region's quality of life.

Each community should review these tools and identify those that can be most useful in their community. In addition, we encourage communities to talk with neighboring jurisdictions to share experiences and to identify common interests. The impacts of development and the steps we take to manage growth and change do not stop at a city or county line, nor does nature.

We also advocate involving a wide range of people and groups within the community in the discussion and decision making process. As leaders in our communities, the members of the RAC recognize that at the local, regional and state level it will take every one of us – working together – to achieve what we all want, a great place to live, work and play.

Recommended State & Regional Actions

"Taking steps to more actively manage the changes that are occurring will help protect the region's character and environmental and scenic assets – and, most importantly, the quality of life we enjoy so much."²²

During the process of developing this strategy, a number of actions and issues have been raised which could not be addressed within the scope or time frame of this effort. Yet, in many instances, these actions could be important to fostering quality growth in northwest Georgia, and in some instances, across the state. As a result, these actions are included in this strategy and will be part of the program advocated by the RAC. The actions have been grouped into three categories:

- Those that fall under the authority and responsibilities of the Coosa Valley and/or North Georgia Regional Development Centers and thus should be incorporated into the Joint Regional Plan;
- Those that can and should be undertaken by the RAC; and



Encouraging development practices that preserve rural and scenic assets while enhancing the region's quality of life.



Involving a wide range of people and groups within the community in the discussion and decision making process.

²² Northwest Georgia Growth Management Initiative, *Land of Legend, People of Vision - Identifying Growth Trends in Northwest Georgia*, 2000.

- Those that need to be addressed at the state level - some of which can be handled by the Departments of Community Affairs or Industry, Trade and Tourism within existing programs and authorizations, others may require legislative action.

Recommended Joint Regional Plan Changes and Regional Development Center Actions

The regional development centers are the primary source of technical assistance for many of the communities in the region. It is important for these entities to pro-actively anticipate the types of service needed and to encourage the implementation of the growth management tools recommended in this strategy. This role should be reflected in the activities outlined in the Joint Regional Plan and Annual Agenda. The RDCs also need to make sure they are responsive when communities indicate an interest in managing the growth occurring in their communities and the region. This may require the RDCs to not only be pro-active but to be creative. Specific actions to be included in the RDC's work plan include:

- Encourage and assist local governments in the region to develop community forest management programs and adopt the ordinance(s) necessary to support such programs. In conjunction with this work, the RDC's should conduct a regional ecosystem analysis using commercially available software and aerial imagery and subsequently monitor regional tree coverage on a regular basis;
- Utilize DCA annual planning funds to provide experienced staff support to actively encourage and assist the local governments in the region adopt a consistent set of development standards. One way to enhance the potential for adoption of consistent standards throughout the region would be to provide one "circuit rider" staff person to assist local governments with this work;
- Continue to develop materials and assist in the implementation of water quality protection tools and management practices, including helping local governments with the local adoption and implementation of state erosion and sedimentation control measures and establishment of local septic system management programs; and
- Develop a regional greenspace plan integrating the green space plans developed at the county level and identify critical regional green space assets, recommending strategies and funding approaches for preserving these areas.



Helping local governments with the adoption and implementation of state erosion and sedimentation control measures.

Recommended RAC Actions

The RAC has an important role in the implementation of this strategy. This role involves facilitation (through workshops and partnerships), advocacy, and recognition locally and at regional and state levels. Specifically the RAC needs to:

Workshops

- Foster the proactive implementation of soil erosion and sedimentation control best management practices within the region by continuing communication and awareness building activities, and sponsoring seminars and workshops; and
- Actively engage the development community in growth management discussions and in the implementation of this strategy. This includes sponsoring workshops on such topics as village center and conservation subdivision development practices.

Partnerships

- Develop a partnership with the Chattowah Open Land Trust and other land trusts within the region to foster awareness within the development community for the importance of preserving forest resources in the region. This may include encouraging area Chambers of Commerce to sponsor community forest management and tree planting programs within their communities; and
- Work with the Department of Community Affairs to develop tools and guidance to encourage clustering and corridor approaches to commercial development.

Advocacy

- Work with the Departments of Community Affairs and Industry, Trade and Tourism and the Department of Transportation to support the development of the Northern Arc in a manner that fosters economic growth but does not encourage sprawl. Steps that should be explored include increasing the size of the buffers on either side of the road, limiting the number of interchanges, and working with the appropriate local governments to implement land use controls around the interchanges. This includes designating the types of land uses allowable around the interchanges as early in the development process as possible.

Recognition

- Develop an awards program to annually recognize regional stewards who lead the implementation of the principles set forth in this strategy and to recognize good development practices.



Encouraging developers to adopt quality growth development practices by sponsoring workshops on such topics as village centers and conservation subdivisions.



Encouraging the “clustering” and “corridor” approaches to commercial development in a manner that fosters economic growth but does not encourage sprawl.

Recommended State Actions

The Department of Community Affairs has been a strong supporter of the RAC's growth management efforts. This support has been fundamental to this Initiative. Similarly, state support and action are critical to the successful implementation of this strategy. The State has a role in providing technical and financial assistance, incentives and leadership. Each of these roles are important. The RAC will work with the appropriate state agencies and, as appropriate, the Governor and Legislature, to secure this ongoing assistance and support. Specific actions sought, include:

Technical & Financial Assistance

- Continue the development of technical assistance tools for the variety of management approaches that can be taken to foster quality growth. Take steps to assure the balanced development of tools that can be used in urbanizing and rural areas as well as those being developed for use in urban parts of the state;
- Use grant funds to foster Resource Team visits such as the one held in Dalton-Whitfield County, the growth management workshop held in Walker County, and the local growth management meetings held by the Initiative;
- Provide capacity development assistance to local governments with growth rates (calculated on the same basis as the green space program) in excess of 20%; and
- Review and change local government transportation, housing and community and economic development grant programs to make sure the eligibility criteria fosters quality growth principles in rural and urbanizing areas of Georgia as well as the urbanized parts of state.

Incentives

- Review and enhance state special district enabling legislation to allow for the local establishment of business or neighborhood improvement districts with the ability to raise funds for needed improvements within designated areas;
- Review and enhance state agricultural preservation regulations to provide adequate incentives for landowners to preserve existing farmland. This should include establishing and funding a Georgia agricultural conservation easement program that compensates farm owners who voluntarily sell the State the development rights for their land and agree to preserve the future agricultural use of their land; and
- Review and enhance state legislation allowing local governments to share tax bases and revenue.



Implementing grant funds to sponsor Resource Team visits throughout Georgia. Design teams and industry professionals work with the community to evaluate the appearance of the town and to formulate a plan for the enhancement of existing resources.



Providing adequate incentives for landowners to preserve existing farmland.

Leadership

- Integrate the principles of quality growth into the planning of state roads and transportation projects;
- Continue to raise awareness about the importance of preserving forested areas in the state and increasing tree coverage by continuing and expanding the Urban and Community Forest Program and linking this program with other initiatives like the Northwest Georgia Growth Management Initiative;
- Continue to expand the Georgia Greenspace Program; and
- Take steps to encourage or require state funded school systems to participate in regional and local growth management and comprehensive planning efforts.

Our Commitment

“The Regional Advisory Council provides a forum for communication between the region and state government and facilitates the coordinated delivery of community and economic development services.”²³

The Initiative has gotten people talking about the need to proactively manage the changes occurring in our communities and region. Through this process we have been able to raise awareness and identify specific management tools, policies, programs, incentives and regulations that can be used to achieve our objectives. Now it is time for action.

No part of this strategy, or our recommendations, is mandatory. It is expected that every community will want to take its own approach to managing its growth and not every community will be ready or capable of moving forward with all of our recommendations at once. At the same time, we do believe everyone needs to do something to foster economic development, preserve our communities, and enhance our region's quality of life.

In conjunction with the preparation of this strategy, we have prepared a series of technical assistance tools designed to help community leaders get started with the implementation of the specific management tools that have been identified in this strategy. These implementation assistance sheets²⁴ are included with this strategy document. These sheets are not intended to provide all of the information or answers that will be needed to implement specific management tools. Nor are they intended to replace the professional and legal advice that will be needed. They are intended to encourage the dialogue about what needs to be done to move toward action.



Raising awareness about the importance of preserving forested areas and increasing tree coverage by expanding the Urban and Community Forest Program and Georgia Greenspace Program.

²³ George Woodward, Chairman, Region One Advisory Council and President, Dalton-Whitfield Chamber of Commerce, 2000.

²⁴ Some of the information included in the implementation assistance sheets was taken from materials prepared by the Department of Community Affairs as part of the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership efforts.

Additional assistance is also available from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Offices of Coordinated Planning, Community Redevelopment and Downtown Development and the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership, as well as the Coosa Valley and North Georgia Regional Development Centers.

We have prepared education and awareness building materials to help encourage and support the implementation of the management techniques we feel are important to our future. RAC members are available to provide peer-to-peer assistance and we encourage you to learn from the experience of others in the region and throughout the state.

RAC members will now work to get these tools and programs implemented at the local, regional and state level. Through our actions we can help foster the balance needed between change and community and environmental preservation.



Offering technical assistance and educational and awareness building materials to help encourage and support the implementation of the management techniques we feel are important to our future.